

THE MILITIA OF ENGLAND, CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

A LETTER

TO THE

“BROAD ARROW.”

1878

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THE MILITIA OF ENGLAND, CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

TO THE EDITOR,

SIR,—The present crisis is naturally drawing considerable attention to our army, and some authorities do not hesitate to aver that the demands on this army are such as to preclude our going to war. We cannot agree in this, but at the same time some steps might be attempted by our Ministers of War and the Colonies to see to what extent the Governments of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand could assist to relieve the situation which, to a great extent, hampers our military power.

In a few words, the situation is this. We have, on the one hand, a large English Army of 62,000 men in India, which cannot leave that country for fear of a rising of the natives and an irruption on the North-West Frontier; and, on the other hand, a Militia Army of 115,000 men, none of whom can be ordered out of England to support the Empire when hard pressed.

That this deadlock will have to be relieved before long is plain, and we are glad to think that it can be brought about without any particular strain or great expense.

We—that is, England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand—are in possession of a magnificent Empire, on which the sun never sets. One of us cannot fall without a grievous and fatal injury to the whole. The time has clearly come when this fact should be fairly faced. We are, all four, apt to become absorbed in the anxieties and political disputes ever going on in each country. We must no longer scan the British Empire through insular spectacles, but taking a wide and imperial view of the situation, make such, as we think, simple arrangements as will secure the mutual help so urgently wanted.

We therefore suggest that, without in any way interfering with the Volunteer forces existing in England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which should be maintained in as high a state of efficiency as possible, the Militia of the four nations should be made “active”—that is, liable to do garrison duty abroad whenever the troubles now be-

ginning in the world render the concentration of the British Army imperative.

The Militia Army at home consists of 123 regiments of Infantry and 32 regiments of Artillery. It is probable that many of these regiments would volunteer, if called on, for the "active" list.

The term of foreign service could be limited to one or two years, with a bounty on embarkation and a year's pension on return.

As a mark of esteem for their readiness to serve their country, the officers of the "active" Militia should be permitted to wear gold lace.

Great care has been taken in the arrangements for the mobilisation of the forces at home, it should therefore be arranged that no gap should occur. All our "active" Militia regiments should be linked with Canadian regiments, which had volunteered for garrison duty in England.

Turning to our garrison army, we find that the East Kent Regiment of Militia has its station at Dover. Should this regiment come on the "active" list and be placed under orders for embarkation, the Canadian regi-

ment linked with it—say, the 5th Royal Fusiliers of Montreal could be sent to Dover.

The Canadian Militia consists of the active Militia and the reserve Militia. The former has not as yet been called on to Volunteer for duty in England, but there can be no doubt that many regiments would do so. Sir Edward Selby Smyth, K.C.M.G., commanding the Dominion Militia, says in his report of 1876 :—

“There is a great military spirit among all classes of the population of Canada, which would ensure immense efforts and sacrifices in the event of alarm or apprehension of danger. It has been frequently exhibited, and it is hardly necessary for me to bring it again to notice so prominently except with the view of adding that, given that valuable element of zealous patriotism, it should be cultivated and encouraged in every possible way to serve the country efficiently, if ever suddenly required to be called into action.”

All who value the integrity of our Empire will rejoice at these words. They come from an authority which cannot be gainsaid, and open the door for those advances towards our

great colonies, which alone are wanting to put us in a proper military position before the world.

The active Militia of ten out of twelve districts in Canada were called out for training in 1876. This force consisted of five regiments of cavalry, fifteen field batteries, forty garrison batteries, and ninety battalions of infantry.

Owing to want of money these regiments were much below their strength. Should, however, any of them volunteer for duty in England, they would receive such attention as would ensure their making a fine appearance in England, where the stalwart sons of Canada would be certain of a hearty reception.

The Canadian field batteries, under the inspection of that able and scientific officer, Lieutenant-Colonel T. B. Strange, R.A., are in an advanced stage of discipline for Militia Artillery. The reserve Militia consists of the enormous number of 600,000 enrolled men, every man of whom must turn out when called on, according to the law of the country.

Of course this prodigious force is not

armed or equipped, as there is no necessity for so doing ; but the Canadians deserve great credit for the example of vigour they have set in passing such a law.

In Australia there are numerous Volunteer corps, but it is now in contemplation to raise a Militia force in that country. It is, therefore, exceedingly opportune to call on the people of Australia and New Zealand to consider the situation carefully. It is our habit at home to talk only of our communications with India *viâ* the Suez Canal : this is caused by the continued use of those insular spectacles we want so much to see abolished. Australia and New Zealand are as deeply interested in the Suez Canal as we are, and we feel convinced that were they only prepared, they would not permit these peaceful communications to be attacked or menaced even. Sooner than see any danger to the Imperial Power from disturbances in India they would garrison Madras, Calcutta, Singapore, and even Hong Kong. We request the Press in Australia and New Zealand to consider these views ; the occasion is urgent, and the Governments of the various colonies

will need advice in the formation of an active Militia. That the spirit exists is plain ; the Mayor of Auckland has written to the Lord Mayor of London that they will not sit still in his country should Imperial interests be attacked.

Although the position of England and India in the world is strategically weak, we are exceedingly fortunate in having young, loyal, and enterprising nations on our flanks. The time, we hope, is coming when they will become a stay and support to the old country.

Should the arrangements we advocate be carried out, a great portion of our Regular Army of 200,000 men would be free to concentrate with a powerful native army where most required. In fact, one point only would remain to make us a military nation, and that is, a considerable increase in the field batteries of the Royal Artillery to be in full proportion to the masses of Infantry we could put in the field.

To give full freedom to an "active" Militia will require a more careful organisation of our great Volunteer army. The three services of the Regular, Militia, and Volunteer

armies of England and her colonies are dependent upon each other's efficiency. No one branch can be neglected without crippling the freedom of action of the others.

During the Crimean War, England raised two foreign legions, one German and one Italian. This proceeding cannot now be repeated, Germans and Italians are wanted to do their own fighting. It is therefore a growing necessity in time of danger to the British Empire, to fall back on the good old constitutional force of Militia so suitable to the genius of the Anglo-Saxon race, to say nothing of its being taken up and laid aside at pleasure. The Militia of England plays a prominent part in our history. The armies of Edward the III., which shattered the chivalry of France, were Militia. It is true they were trained to shoot with the bow, but so can the Militia be now with their rifles. The battles of the Wars of the Roses were fought by Militia troops.

Burgoyne with his regulars, Hessians and Indians, had to surrender at Saratoga to the Militia of the English Colonists in America. Numbers of Militiamen, fresh from their

regiments, swelled the ranks of our infantry at the battle of Waterloo, and lastly, the terrible battles of the Wilderness round Richmond, were fought out to the bitter end by Militia troops.

The population of the English Colonies in America, when they were driven into a separation from the Mother Country, was only 2,000,000. That of Australia is now 2,500,000, with a trade of £86,000,000, equal, as a writer has lately said, to the commerce of England at the commencement of this century, when she foiled united Europe in its confederacy against her. Her boundless pastures are occupied by 52,000,000 sheep and 3,000,000 cattle. These figures prove that this is no mushroom growth of a transient nature. Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor of New South Wales, calculates that at the end of this century Australia will have a population of 5,000,000 and in 1950, 31,000,000. The City of Melbourne is one of the most beautiful in the world, and contains over 260,000 inhabitants.

New Zealand is also rapidly increasing in

wealth and population, and has a splendid future in prospect. We do not, therefore, think the proposal an extravagant one, that as a commencement New Zealand should raise two regiments of active Militia, Queensland two, New South Wales four, Victoria four, and South Australia two regiments. If these fourteen regiments were carefully trained and kept up to the strength of 1,000 men each, England would gladly pay for their services for garrison duty in the east, when compelled to concentrate some of her regular infantry elsewhere.

Such arrangements, supported by English Militia regiments, would strengthen our position in India. The natives throughout that country would be quickly informed that another great English power had suddenly appeared on the stage in the east, and that rebellion, anarchy, and bloodshed were further off than ever.

It is argued that some of our Colonies do not even attend properly to their means of defence. In one the money necessary is withheld by political squabbles ; in another, so much has been spent on railways that none

remains for defensive purposes. We fear this is too true, and that our kinsmen are dwelling carelessly. We appeal to their honour, and warn them to be up and doing, and to quit themselves like men.

There can be no surer way of consolidating the power of the British Empire, than by leading the young nations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, to join in its trials and struggles, as well as in its glories, and it is because the subject has never been laid before them that we have asked you, Sir, to publish this letter in your important Military Journal.

C. M. G. & P.

Army and Navy Club,

February 12th, 1878.

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